

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 22 July 2017

Partially
Confidential

Dear Committee,

I recently made a submission to the committee re: bullying and harassment in the emergency services, more specifically in relation to FRNSW. My submission was quite lacking in detail and fairly rushed, and I wished to add a little more perspective to my previous comments. I hope this is acceptable.

As I said in my previous submission I believe bullying and harassment are widespread in FRNSW. I have witnessed a number of examples of this in my career with FRNSW. From the female fire fighter who was daily brought to tears by her boss who hated females in the job, to the station officer who was called "a poof" on a number of occasions by his inspector because he had long hair to the examples I list below. I write in frustration that for all their talk FRNSW doesn't seem to take issues seriously, and the committee enquiry is a chance to vent my frustrations at the lip service only paid to bullying and harassment complaints.

I believe a lot of this bullying is from senior officers, who have been through the system over the years in a culture and time where bullying was more prevalent. These men (nearly all men) have now been promoted and probably believe this sort of behaviour is acceptable.

I have witnessed the deliberate and systematic bullying of a colleague to the stage where he is now medically retired and is seeking redress in the legal system

I see the issues in regards to bullying behaviour within FRNSW broadly relating to four key areas.

1. An ingrained culture of bullying behaviour lingering from earlier times, that was prevalent when many of our now and previous senior officers came through the ranks.

2. A lack of effective training by properly trained and qualified trainers, and a targeting of fire fighters with the little training there is, rather than management.

3. Hopelessly inadequate promotion procedures both in the past (the promotion of clearly unsuitable people from a people management viewpoint- all they had to do was pass a knowledge test) and present for officers in regards to people management.

4. The lack of ability, desire or resources to effectively enact policies and investigate issues internally.

Numerous policies, procedures and associated propaganda from FRNSW have sprung up recently in an attempt to be seen to be doing something (to tick the corporate boxes) yet at our level nothing changes.

I would encourage the committee to look at the Workplace Standards/ Professional Standards departments in FRNSW and the role they play in dealing with issues. Underneath all the talk and rhetoric, look at what they actually do and how they operate. I know in my case when I witnessed bullying behaviour towards a colleague and witnessed my station officer deliberately and wilfully acting outside our organisation's code of conduct.

I made a formal complaint and I have never been contacted by Workplace standards

Even if it was found my accusations were unwarranted, one would think that even an acknowledgement that there had been an investigation would be appropriate. Nothing heard.

Workplace Standards never interviewed or spoke to any member of the medically retired ff's crew to find out what was happening or what occurred, but relied on the statements of those who were

out to drive him from the job.

I am also concerned that fire fighters who have been bullied will not make submissions to the committee for fear of reprisal, and the committee will receive a rosy view of frnsw from their submission. The union was to make a submission also, but will not get involved in member v member issues. Our act says we cannot comment against our organisation or the government and many may fear reprisal.

This is why I make my submission to you in confidentiality.

I thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Senior fire fighter

FRNSW